



MARSS EMERGE 2021

Multicultural Youth Summit Report

22 June 2021

Canberra, Australia



Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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EMERGE2021 was possible thanks to the hard work of our Multicultural Youth Steering Committee members:

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Santigie Kamara	Sierra Leonean community
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Sonesh Seddiqi	Afghani community
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EMERGE2021 was made possible by support from the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs and Department of Social Services.

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the EMERGE2021 Summit Report. For the first time, MARSS Australia Inc. hosted a Multicultural Youth Summit to bring together young people from multicultural backgrounds to talk about the things that matter to them, and to hear their ideas for the future.

This summit emerged from a series of youth roundtables MARSS conducted at the end of last year. It was a great opportunity to listen to groups of focused, articulate, culturally and linguistically diverse young people discuss the unique issues of concern to them.

Education, employment, and a sense of belonging were identified as the key areas where young people felt that improved support was required to see multicultural youth thrive in the ACT. And so, EMERGE2021 was born, to facilitate further discussion and investigation of these issues and other issues of importance to our region's multicultural youth, and to provide young people with the opportunity to be part of the solution.

EMERGE2021 acknowledged the impact of settlement on multicultural youth in the ACT. The Summit brought together representatives from the settlement sector, service providers, Federal and ACT government departments, together with young people themselves, to build our knowledge and

understanding of the issues, concerns, and challenges multicultural young people are facing.

The purpose of EMERGE2021 was to give multicultural youth the opportunity to voice the issues, concerns and challenges they face living in the ACT, as well as sharing their ideas for bringing about positive change. The aims of the summit were to:

- Give the future generation a voice in shaping their participation as active citizens
- Understand the challenges that multicultural young people experience
- Hear directly from young people their ideas for bringing positive change
- Work towards shaping the future in a positive and inclusive manner
- Identify barriers that prevent young people from harnessing their full potential
- Share best practice examples and opportunities that strengthen the ability of young people to achieve their education and employment goals.
- Develop strategies for inclusion and belonging, especially through education and employment
- Increase young people's sense of belonging

This report provides a summary of the issues discussed at the summit, and young people's ideas for addressing these. The report provides us with a strong starting point for developing new initiatives that build on the ideas presented by the young people at EMERGE2021. MARSS Australia looks forward to working with our partners and stakeholders to help achieve these aims.

Dewani Bakkum,
CEO, MARSS Australia Inc



EMERGE2021 Youth Summit Speeches

Welcoming Address

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all today to MARSS' first Multicultural Youth Summit, EMERGE2021. I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal People, and to pay my respects to Elders past, present and future.

I extend a warm welcome to our patron, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley. We also appreciate the presence of Alison Larkins, Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services, and all the attendees from both Commonwealth and ACT government, and are so pleased that they can be here today to hear directly from our young conference delegates.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Board of MARSS for their support today and recognise the attendance of Andrew Ng, Mithun Alexander, Borhan Ahmed and Isaac Cotter.

And most importantly I welcome all of the young conference delegates who have come today ready to share their experiences, challenges and ideas for the future. Today is all about you!

At MARSS we work together with a great network of community and service providers to deliver quality services and programs to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in our region. I would like to thank the stallholders for coming along today and sharing information about their services with our delegates.

This summit emerged from a series of youth roundtables MARSS conducted at the end of

last year. It was a great opportunity to listen to groups of focused, articulate, culturally and linguistically diverse young people discuss the unique issues of concern to them.

Education, employment, and a sense of belonging were identified as key areas where these young people felt that improved support was required to see multicultural youth thrive in the ACT. And so, EMERGE2021 was born, to facilitate further discussion and investigation of these issues and other issues of importance to our region's multicultural youth, and to give you all the opportunity to be part of the solutions.

We are holding **EMERGE2021** today in recognition of Refugee Week and to highlight the contributions to Australia made by refugees and particularly refugee youth.

We have a wonderful line-up of keynote speakers and panelists from the

- Australian Government Department of Home Affairs
- Office of Multicultural Affairs, ACT
- Commissioner for Children and Young People, ACT
- Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Canberra Business Chamber
- University of Canberra, and
- Youth and Disability Advocate and the Co-owner of GG's Flower

All of these people will be sharing their experiences and insights with us today.

At MARSS, we meet many young people from CALD backgrounds with the intelligence, determination, passion, and ability to become Australia's leaders of tomorrow. Whether you are a recently arrived refugee, or from a family whose parents migrated to Australia many years ago, you have a unique perspective and background to be celebrated and valued,

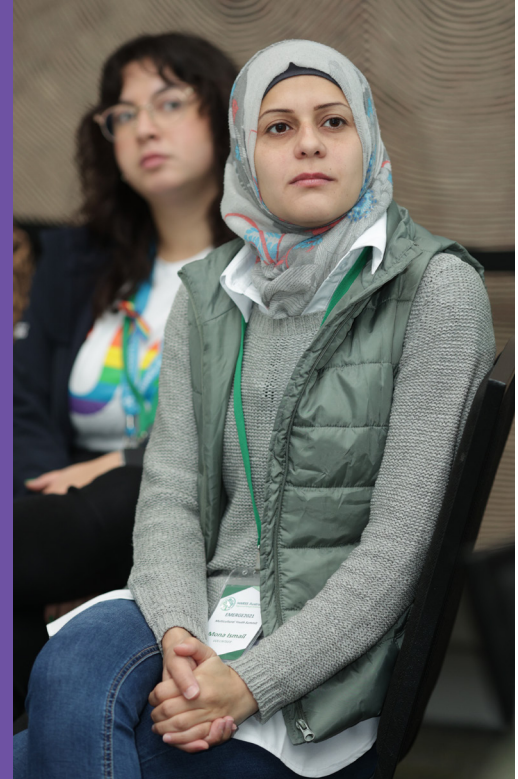
and you should be supported to achieve your full potential. So, I encourage you today to speak up and know that your voice will be heard.

I would like to conclude by thanking the people and organisations who have sponsored, supported or dedicated their time to making today a success. This includes:

- University of Canberra
- The student scribes from the Australian National University and University of Canberra,
- The Settlement Council of Australia
- The Children and Young People Commissioner and the ACT Human Rights Commission
- The Commonwealth Bank
- Multicultural Youth Services
- Companion House
- PCYC
- Canberra Institute of Technology
- Kids Helpline
- Marymead
- Menslink
- Navitas
- MARSS' Multicultural Youth Committee, and
- All of the MARSS team

Finally, thank you to our youth conference delegates here today – we really appreciate your presence and your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences today. We commit to taking these key messages away and working to continually improve the design and delivery of youth-based community services so that they continue to meet your changing needs.

Dewani Bakkum
CEO, MARSS Australia Inc



Governor-General's Opening Address

I would like to welcome you to the *Emerge2021 Multicultural Youth Summit*. In my role I am often asked about where we are as a country and what the future holds. I am unashamedly optimistic about our future. I am optimistic because day-in-day-out, in communities around Australia, Linda and I are privileged to witness examples of people doing good work. People who are serving tirelessly, not for themselves, but to help those around them and their community. People who are compassionate and kind. People who are proactively shaping the future – taking on the big problems and creating a better community.

We are a good people – a strong people – and that should give all of us great confidence for the future. We have different backgrounds, different experiences and different cultures. Yet we are one nation and we are all Australians. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Indeed, it is a core component of our strength. None of us are blind to the challenges that we face: they exist and we must, collectively and as individuals, deal with them.

Your presence at this Summit is admirable as it speaks to your willingness to help shape our future. I encourage you to be brave, be prepared to tackle problems head on and be willing to listen to others' perspectives. Thank you for taking part and thank you to MARSS Australia for bringing together this important event.

His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia



Minister's Message

Thank you for coming along today to this fantastic event held by MARSS Australia. It's so important that young people have opportunities to be heard, to voice their opinions on the world around them and their aspirations for what they would like to do and see. This is a chance for you all to share your experiences, any concerns you have, or issues you face living here in the ACT, so that as a government we can understand where the gaps are and how to improve services across Canberra.

So, dig deep and don't hold back. I look forward to hearing about what change you want to see and how the ACT Government can support that.

Yvette Berry
*Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
ACT Legislative Assembly*



MP's Video Address

G'day. My name is Andrew Leigh, the Federal Member for Fenner. I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal People on whose lands I am speaking to you from today.

*Dhawura nguna dhawura Ngoonawal
Yaangu ngalamanyin dhunimanyin
Ngoonawalwarii dhawurawarii dindi
Wanggiralidjinyin*

(This is an acknowledgement of Country in the Ngunnawal language)

I pay my respects to any Indigenous People joining your important conversation today. The discussion about the role of multicultural youth in Australia's future is a discussion about Australia's future itself because apart from Indigenous Australians, every Australian is a migrant or a child of migrants. And so, your story will ultimately write Australia's story, you have as much right to participate in Australia's public conversations as anyone, and we benefit for the energy and ideas that migration brings to Australia.

Successive waves of migrants have enriched Australia in countless ways. Most obviously through cuisine but much more important in subtle ways in how we work, how we play, and how we govern ourselves. As a member of parliament, I am constantly struck by the coherence of multicultural communities, and their desire to give something back to what Australia that is given so much to them. Our local sporting teams are crying out for the

talents of new migrants. I just remember the smiles in the face of one local AFL club when I introduced them to a couple Sudanese refugee youth who quickly went on to play with great success in the team.

Make sure you keep your ideas flowing confidently. If you want to get in touch, please send me an email. I am not hard to find, my websites the modestly named, Andrewleigh.com. But I want you to be inspired, to be part of Australia's story. Because Australia, in its essence, is not a chunk of land; it is a set of people, with its vision and values. And each of us has a responsibility to play our part in making Australia a richer, more connected, more egalitarian nation. I look forward to hearing some of the results of your conversations today.

Hon. Dr. Andrew Leigh MP
Member for Fenner, ACT



Keynote Speech – Youth Employment, Belonging and Education

I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land from which I am speaking to you - the Ngunnawal people - and by paying my respects to their leaders, past, present and emerging. I also extend that acknowledgement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today, including Warren Daley who provided the Welcome to Country and the Wiradjuri Echoes who gave such a fantastic dance performance.

I would also like to thank His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) for launching this wonderful event, and acknowledge Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley and other dignitaries who are here today.

And of course, thank you to Dewani Bakkum and the rest of the team at Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services – both for inviting me here today and for all the work you do every day to support people of migrant and refugee backgrounds.

As the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services, I have the pleasure of helping ensure that the Commonwealth Government – together with other levels of government and our communities – can support the settlement and integration experience of refugees.

Thinking about how we can drive better settlement outcomes for young migrants is central to my work – not just because of the unique challenges faced by young refugees and migrants, but also because of the important contributions young people like yourselves have made, and will continue to make, to our country.

Of course, none of us could have expected COVID-19 and the drastic impact it has had on the Australian economy and by extension the economic and social life of young people like yourselves. We know that refugee and migrant youth have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 economic shock, as the path to employment can be more difficult for migrant youth than for Australian-born youth. Therefore, encouraging young refugees and migrant youth to continue staying engaged in education and helping them to explore pathways to employment that will support them to achieve their future aspirations has never been more important. We know through both research and discussions with refugee and migrant groups that employment plays a vital role in helping establish strong social bonds within communities, build confidence and independence among individuals and form a sense of belonging within society.

I'm encouraged by the work I see social enterprises doing to create employment pathways for young refugees and migrants. Last year, I worked with the Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council on the creation of an employment guide for business looking to hire migrants, and specifically, refugees. As part of that work, I met with an organisation called CareerSeekers, which helps match university students of refugee background with employers aligned with their skills and aspirations. Students are offered a 12 week internship and are supported by CareerSeekers throughout this time, working with big Australian companies.



Internships like these help students learn the local work and industry culture and develop professional networks. Through the program, young refugees report they gain practical work experience and it's helping them to secure a job in their chosen profession. CareerSeekers reports that many of its interns go on to take up a permanent position at the organisation they interned with.

Along with CareerSeekers, there are many other organisations and advocates who, like those at the summit today, are trying to address the challenges faced by young migrants settling in Australia. For example, last year, the Multicultural Youth Network, MYAN, released a new Settlement Framework and one of the things I valued greatly about the Framework was that it recognises the role of the family in youth settlement – critically, it recognises that relationships with family and community often provide young people with a sense of belonging and support in negotiating various challenges and transitions. Family is important because it can help you connect with shared values and culture. It's an invaluable resource that should be drawn on in times such as these where you have to negotiate various challenges such as those relating to work, relationships and getting an education.

In early May, I visited the regional town of Armidale in New South Wales, home to many Ezidi refugees. The Ezidi community are an ethnic minority group from Northern Iraq

and parts of Syria and Turkey. Around 600 refugees from this area have made their home in Armidale since February 2018. It was a pleasure to meet some of these refugees and hear about how they are currently thriving in Armidale. Many have secured employment and aspirations are high within the community – a large number of young Ezidis hoping to continue their education to become doctors or pharmacists. Access to, and experience of, education is a great creator of opportunity. Not only can education help provide the skills and competencies needed for employment; quality learning and support can help you develop the skills and confidence needed to participate in Australia's rich political and social life. Summits like this one are a fantastic means of nurturing and uniting Australia's future leaders. I strongly believe that all of you, as young refugees and migrants, are the future. I hope you all enjoy participating throughout the rest of the summit and that the discussions you have here today are both productive and rewarding.

Alison Larkins

Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services

Department of Home Affairs



Identifying Issues, Barriers and Challenges for Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds in the ACT



The young people participating in the summit took part in two roundtable discussion groups. In the first of these, each table of participants was asked to spend time exploring the issues, barriers and challenges faced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the ACT regarding the three key issues being explored at the summit – education, employment and belonging.

The following is a summary of the issues raised and discussed by the summit delegates.

Education

The issues identified by young people concerning education included:

- English classes provided to young people upon entering Australia do not provide a broad enough platform for studying at school, college or university – terminology for assignments, writing, and classes do not translate easily for young people. Many young people said **“English classes did not prepare me”**
- Not having their overseas qualifications recognised – and therefore having to repeat school, college or university
- Lack of support within schools – from teachers and other students
- Transitioning between different educational settings is difficult – if there are gaps in your education, how do you identify these gaps and fill them without the help of a teacher?
- Language barriers - communication about due dates, exams etc. can be challenging when you are still learning English
- Asking questions in class when English isn't your first language is really scary and can be quite confronting – teachers need to encourage young people and help them feel comfortable
- Young people need more “checking in” and assistance from teachers and other education staff
- Barriers due to age – young people advised that over 18's are not able to study at college in ACT
- Young people are expected to be independent learners, even if you aren't familiar with the society, the culture or how they should be acting
- Young people often need to work to help support their families – **“It's hard to balance work and study”**
- People make assumptions about your language capacity and cultural background because you are from a refugee or migrant background
- Experiences of discrimination about who I am and where I came from – **“It's hard when their mind is set”**
- Having people tell you what you can't do or won't be able to achieve – such as going to university
- It's easier if you arrive in Australia when you are younger – there is less pressure to study and learn English quickly
- Communication barriers create a sense of competition in the school environment, which in turns increases social isolation
- Many Australian students are inconsiderate. One young person was told **“you're dumb”** when they asked a question about something they didn't understand
- While they are doing ESL classes, young people are missing out on other important classes / subjects
- The learning is rushed – there is lots to understand but not enough time for the learning. There is a need to catch up on so many things
- Young people (and often teachers too) are not educated about cultural differences
- There is often inaction from teachers when racism is reported. **“There's no point in reporting it when no action is taken”.**

Young people made the following recommendations to tackle some of the issues raised:

- There is a strong need to teach social and political issues in schools, so Australian born young people are more empathetic, and Canberrans are better educated about migrant and refugee issues
- Establish practical careers development / support programs in schools and colleges to support young people to apply for jobs – cover letter, resume etc
- Change policies to recognise previous education and experience, including offering Recognised Prior Learning for overseas schooling and qualifications
- More resources are needed to support young people to navigate the pathways between school, college and university.

Employment

The issues identified by young people concerning employment included:

- Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have a range of skills and talents that aren't being fully recognised or utilised – including language skills; qualification from “back home”; broader perspectives; a larger world view; and valuable life experiences that Australian born young people do not have
- Gaining employment is challenging - even for basic jobs like retail
- Fluency in English language and availability are key to success in getting work
- Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds tend to have better success with finding hospitality jobs rather than retail jobs
- Employer's demand experience, but young people and have not had the opportunity to gain that experience.
- Having no work experience in Australia is also a barrier to employment
- Refugee and migrant young people's skills and talents are not recognised – such as their open-mindedness; adaptability; language skills etc
- Young people spoke of experiences of racism at work
- Refugee and migrant young people find it hard to compete with Australian-born young people in the job market
- Applying without prior personal contacts in the workplace is difficult. You need to know people to get a job – “It's not about qualifications, but who you know”
- There are very limited opportunities to “break into” the workforce - there is a need for more entry level jobs that don't require experience
- Some young people feel anxious about their interactions in the workplace because their English is limited
- Young people spoke about having to change their appearance to be accepted - such as their hair, religious representations like hijabs, earrings etc
- A lack of transport is a hindrance to getting to work. Not being able to drive and/or afford a car limits employment opportunities
- “Employers don't give you enough time to learn the job”
- Some young people are cautious about working at a young age because of negative cultural stereotypes within their own communities, as in some cultures it is uncommon for teenagers to work. There are negative stereotypes within some communities - if a teenager works, it means that their parents cannot provide for them
- Young people spoke about employers exploiting migrant and refugee workers by under-paying them, or being taking advantage of in the workplace, such as changing roles without permission – “You apply for and get a receptionist job, but end up working there as a cleaner”
- Co-workers often treat you differently because of your cultural background, religion or language
- Australian-born people are more likely to get promoted over people of colour
- For people with overseas qualifications, it is difficult to re-qualify as it costs a lot of money and time. People end up working in unskilled jobs because their experiences are not recognised or valued



- Some visas limit people’s employability – employers do not want people who are limited to a certain number of working hours. Even when they become permanent resident, businesses prefer people to be citizens
- Young people are often overlooked for a job because of their name being “foreign”. Young people often change their names to have more chance of success when looking for work

Young people made the following recommendations to tackle some of the issues raised:

- Young people need targeted support to understand the different types of workplaces and their expectations
- Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds need opportunities to utilise their qualifications and to showcase their skills
- Being able to try different jobs before getting a job
- Employers should take in young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and train them – give them different skills and experiences
- Opportunities for more flexible reskilling and recognition of overseas qualifications so that these are relevant to the Australian workplace - so that “duplicating” study is not necessary and prior experience can be recognised
- Providing specialised support services that target specific demographics/cultures would be beneficial for young people to feel comfortable working in and using these services.



Belonging

Young people began by discussing the meaning of the word “belonging”. Their ideas included:

- Fitting in
- Feeling safe
- Lack of racism
- Welcoming and acceptance
- Confidence
- Positive feelings
- Celebrating the identity of a person
- Celebrating values and culture
- Belonging brings opportunities
- Getting incorporated into society and not looking or feeling like an outsider
- Practicing your own culture without judgement.
- Comfortable with being yourself
- Being more open-minded - being open and accepting of others, and of cultural differences
- Sharing different ways of living
- Feeling at home when playing traditional music, eating traditional food
- Sharing your language and culture with others

The issues identified by young people concerning belonging included:

- Communities are often closed off to outsiders
- People say they want others to belong, but don't make an effort to help people. For example, the “check-in” signs in Canberra are only in English. **“Things like this make you feel out of place”**
- People often explain things in offensive or insensitive ways – **“culture-splaining”**
- Newly arrived people often think “once I speak English and have permanent residency, everything will be easier”, but it's not the case
- There is a lack of support at Centrelink for people who aren't citizens
- The difficulty of applying for things and the amount of documentation required discourages people from trying to achieve their goals
- Dealing with closeminded or inexperienced people makes things more difficult
- People often perceive you as a stereotype, no matter how hard you might try not to be
- Overt racism is still prevalent. **“It is demeaning and exhausting to have to constantly deal with this”**

- Many young people feel that they have to change themselves and forget about their background just to feel like they belong
- There is pressure to fit in – physically and culturally
- Language can be a significant barrier to fitting in
- Cultural differences make things hard
- Identity crisis occurs between Australian culture and our culture of origin
- Traditional expectations (parents' expectations) are conflicted with Australian culture. **“Parents want to preserve our traditional culture and values”**
- **“Moving to a new country, you get lost between losing your own country and adapting to Australia. You end up losing your own culture to belong”**. Finding a balance is important
- In the school environment, people stay away from those with mixed backgrounds
- It's hard to have the confidence to go out and meet people

Young people made the following recommendations to tackle some of the issues raised:

- Create opportunities to celebrate differences and realise we are more similar than different
- Increase awareness of these issues in the media
- Run more events, activities and opportunities for people to mix and integrate with other cultures.
- More events like this – EMERGE2021 Youth Summit. **“This is a great event for sharing culture”; “This event should happen more than once”; “People are proud on this day but quiet on other days”**
- Educate people from the start. Having friends from diverse backgrounds is (or should be) normal; their cultures are normal!
- Provide youth groups where migrants and refugee young people that have been in Australia for a while help newly arrived young people to settle - **“They've been in their place so they can help them”**
- Develop an app to meet and make new friends
- Encourage and create opportunities for people to get out of their comfort zones, and get out to meet new people.





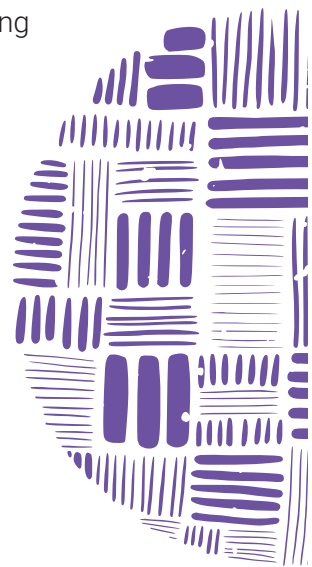
Exploring Young People's Solutions

Having explored the issues, barriers, challenges and that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face in the first roundtable discussion, young people went back into roundtable discussions. In their second discussion, young people again worked in small groups, with each table asked to focus on one of the three focus issues – education, employment and belonging. This time, the groups were asked to focus “dig deeper”, exploring their ideas for solutions to one or more of the challenges they identified in the first roundtable discussion. Finally, they were asked to develop a one minute presentation or “pitch”, which they would present to a Panel of Experts.

The Panel of Experts was comprised of the following people:

Salar Ayoubi	Senior Policy Officer, Office of Multicultural Affairs
Dr Justin Barker	CEO, The Youth Coalition of the ACT
Graham Catt	CEO, Canberra Business Chamber
Jodie Griffiths-Cook	Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission
Annie McCarthy	Assistant Professor of Global Studies, University of Canberra

Following the presentation pitches by the young people, the Panel of Experts provided feedback on the young people's solutions. A summary of the ideas presented by the young people, and the responses by the Panel of Experts, is included below.



Education

Pitch 1: Increase political education and awareness in schools

Group 1 proposed a way to better educate Australian born young people about external political issues occurring outside of Australia, in countries such as Tibet and Syria. This will better facilitate inclusiveness and reduce discrimination by raising young people's awareness.

The program would include the following principles:

- Education should be inclusive
- There should be separate classes / sessions during school time dedicated to teaching young people about different cultural backgrounds, cultural norms etc
- It may include current affairs, politics etc.
- Have people from different organisations go into local schools
- Challenge racism and promote human rights
- The classes should be voluntary

Response by the Panel of Experts:

- Schools are a great place to talk about politics and begin political education
- Have community groups and universities come into schools, university running programs at schools, outreach. Get experts from the community to go in and decide what gets taught. Make it ACT specific
- Don't leave this up to the schools / teachers – there are people in the community who are better placed to do this
- We shouldn't wait until young people turn 18 to learn about politics and political engagement
- Use "bottom up" approaches – were students create interest groups, encourage teachers to get involved - teaching and engaging, helping young people to make inquiries
- Feed directly to Minister Yvette Berry - have conversations of importance to the ACT
- The National Curriculum is currently under review – it's a good time to be recommending changes
- Schools work like "kingdoms" - each school does its own thing. Approach each school separately

Pitch 2: Having a mentor to navigate help the Australian Education system

Group 2 proposed a program where newly arrived young people have a mentor to help them navigate their new school and the Australian education system more broadly. The program would include:

- Mentoring support for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Address the fact that when you first arrive, young people don't receive enough support to learn English
- Young people need mentoring – how to introduce yourself to the Australian educational system
- All of these issues can lead to confusion, mental health issues and trouble adapting to your new society, so providing a mentor to overcome these will benefit young people themselves and the broader community.

Response from the Panel of Experts:

- Governments and Ministers rely heavily on feedback from the community – in this case, what ministers hear from the multicultural community
- Reach out to assembly members, MLA's. Organise a meeting to talk about how they can improve services
- Young people need education on how to access these people
- People need mentors – help in how to get around
- Think about your school and community. Schools could better help young people to get information on programs available at the local level
- Look at organising mentors through schools – this could be a job for someone to take on
- As much as adult mentors are helpful, peer mentors should also be utilised (from within schools). They can help young people build a community of peers in their schools, as young people can relate to the experiences of other youths

Pitch 3: Teaching teachers and Australian-born young people about culture to build cultural competence

Group 3 proposed a program whereby both teachers and Australian-born students learn about cultural diversity and how to become more culturally competent. Key elements of this program include:

- Australian-born students are often unaware of what can and cannot be said
- They need to be taught how they can make people from CALD backgrounds feel safe and welcome
- This is not always the students' fault – there is a lack of education about other cultures; how they can be respected; and how they work
- This lack of education reinforces disrespect, and reinforces accidental discrimination
- We need to think about how can we make sure teachers know about these issues, and are able to teach their students about them
- How can we raise awareness about this?

Response from the Panel of Experts:

- UC offers classes in cultural awareness. There are some education students in those classes – we need more of these classes, and for it to be compulsory
- We need teachers to have more training in cultural competence – one semester of university doesn't cover it enough
- People also need refresher courses more often – UC is interested in refreshers, and running workshops in schools
- A lot of racism is in "the undertones". Universities should help address this

- Working groups in schools can be a good way to recognise and acknowledge where racism is happening
- Teaching programs need to be more inclusive
- When schools are in areas with lots of migrants it's easier. If the majority of the school is "white" people it is much more difficult to be inclusive
- The Dept of Education should have multicultural officer visiting schools one or two days a week - to visit young people from multicultural backgrounds and check in with them
- Schools need clear expectations – what is and isn't allowed – but how do you enforce that?
- Teachers need to step up and challenge racism. Then we need to think about how your peers can be taught to intervene and act correctly. How do you have a conversation with someone being racist in a constructive way?
- Teaching people how to have that conversation - when do you do it? How do you make it productive? This is a skillset that will transfer to workplaces. They are "enterprising" skills. This is a skill that can be taught.





Employment

Pitch 4: Bridging Australia – Matching people’s overseas skills and qualifications with available jobs

Group 4 proposed establishing a company called Bridging Australia. Bridging Australia would do the following things:

- Bridging courses so that overseas qualifications and grades can be properly translated to the Australian context
- Work with businesses – they should have migrant job quotas
- Offer cultural awareness courses in businesses
- Multilingual assistance – so refugee and migrant young people aren’t blocked out - they bring lots of skills; cultural experience; unique points of view,
- Reach out through embassies, schools, radio, religious institutes

Response from the Panel of Experts:

- This idea is great because you have created a business. Businesses solve problems!
- The notion of pathways is really good. In the ACT we have the greatest shortage of employees and labour skills in Australia. This is an issue for the whole country at the moment. This is driven by the fact that we don’t have international students or people on working visas at the moment – so it’s a good time to be coming up with solutions that address this shortage
- Qualifications from other country - the way they are graded and learned - is different to Australia. How do we map that? We might look at bridging courses at schools, CIT, universities etc.
- You need to talk to the relevant sector or industry, to see what skills they need; what skills people already have; and how to bridge that gap. Newly arrived people may be missing only 20% of what they need. Then we can create the pathways that are needed to fill those gaps
- Cultural diversity should be a strength. Employers often know it’s meant to be a strength, but they don’t know how to get around language barriers or take advantage of existing skills
- Sometimes discrimination happens because people don’t have the answers and so they take the easy route
- Take what you have and turn it into an opportunity – there’s never been a better time!

Pitch 5: MARES – the Migrant and Refugee Employment Service

Group 5 proposed establishing a new organisation called M.A.R.E.S - Migrant and Refugee Employment Services.

Mission: Supporting young refugees in their employment journey

Vision: Sustaining and fulfilling inclusive employment for migration and refugees

Thing that MARES will address include:

- Lack of experience
- Building connections
- Language and other skills
- Qualifications and recognition
- A helpline for inquiring about skills, opportunities etc for free –
- The service will operate like Lifeline – you can call, email, message on website (live chat)
- A website with lots of useful information
- An app where you'll get updates on your job searching
- How to dress, how to act
- Practice interview skills
- Help you write your resume, how you get to a job
- Support from someone that has the right connections – a person that holds your resume and advocates for individuals
- Organisations that offers volunteer opportunities
- Help with driver's licence
- Help people not just get work, but actually achieve their career goals and aspirations

Response from the Panel of Experts:

- In the ACT the Dept Education and OMA offer the Work Experience Support Program (WESP). It is tailored for people from multicultural backgrounds, giving 8 weeks of work experience at a government office and 4 weeks at CIT covering office skills
- WESP has no age restrictions. If you have lived in Australia for less than 7 years you can submit a resume or contact OMA. They will assess and place you if successful
- WESP was designed several years ago and could do with being updated
- Young people should come forward through their community groups and organisations to give their ideas - design something that suits the multicultural community better
- OMA assesses overseas qualifications and can provide more information about this
- There are gaps for certain qualifications
- Government employment processes are not as transparent as they make out. The reality is they need to face this issue



Belonging

Pitch 6: Challenging Stereotypes and Discrimination

Group 6 proposed developing programs that challenge stereotypes and discrimination. The program would include:

- Cross-cultural systems implemented into school classes through cultural clubs and promoting diversity
- Challenge discrimination in the workplace by educating people about their rights, equal pay etc. Develop resources to help people to be informed, working with government, unions etc.
- Develop resources to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, including resources for parents / families to support young people
- A video project with young people explain the importance of mental health and explaining the impact that racism and discrimination have on mental health
- Information sessions in settlement services for parents and families about the importance of mental health
- Government and non-profit organisations working together to provide work experience, help with resume writing, cover letters etc

Response from the Panel of Experts:

- The Children and Young People's Commissioner is developing a consultation with young people about their experiences of discrimination and racism - what does it look like and feel like for young people? What language is used? How do they describe it?
- Jodie is keen to look at how to shift and change it, and how these issues can be positively addressed in schools, sporting grounds etc
- The idea of local collaborations is good. Jodie will feed this into the consultation
- Jodie wants young people to help design the consultations, focus groups, surveys, etc. in culturally sensitive way so it truly addresses the issues

- We need to look at how young people can get support from their communities
- Using schools to address racism and stereotypes is a great idea - improving knowledge.
- It is best addressed through group activities - sharing culture and knowledge. It's harder to hate someone when you get to know them!
- The transition to college is a culture shock. It's harder for CALD young people. The mental health system can be hard to navigate too. Normally it is at school where you might check in with your peers. But there are plenty of barriers
- Helping people to access support for mental health is a really good idea. Barriers to identifying mental health support is only made harder by stigma, lack of knowledge etc.
- It's hard to know what to do or where to go for help. Willingness to ask for help is one of the most important things you can do.

Pitch 7: Providing young people with opportunities to make new friends

Group 7's idea was to develop programs and activities that support newly arrived young people (and others) to make new friends. The project involves the following:

- A buddy program within schools to help support newly arrived young people to make friends and understand their new culture
- Youth groups and multicultural hubs offered after school (or in schools) to build connections and experience with the language.
- Have young people who previously arrived as refugees or migrants helping newly arrived young people when they move to Australia
- Offer programs and activities to help build confidence
- A phone app to link people together and make friends

Response from the Panel of Experts:

- Making friends is easier for younger children. When you get older is harder.
- The idea of mentoring groups supporting young people to make friends is a fantastic idea - peer support and mentoring
- It's good to acknowledge that different people in different contexts need different types of help and support
- How do you build friendships that are meaningful?
- Having a youth-led space is very meaningful
- How can you apply this to different types of connections?
- People often ignore people who are "different" from them. How do we break that down so that people who already have friends see the benefits of extending past their pre-existing friendship groups?
- We focus too much on schools and universities – they're an isolated community within the broader community. Is the entire wider community friendly to new people coming in? Urban design in ACT is not inclusive
- The "bubble" in Canberra leads to a lack of respect for multicultural communities
- We need to assist multicultural businesses to set up and operate how they do in other areas.
- Many people come out when there is a multicultural festival
- Canberra needs to be a more multiculturally friendly place. There is still a lot of work to do
- What things can and should be a government responsibility? Or children and youth led? Or community led? Where does it need to come from?
- There are some things that young people can address and other things that adults need to step up and take responsibility for.





Finally, each panellist was asked to outline one thing they would do in the next few days to take forward the ideas presented by the young people today:

Salar Ayoubi

In terms of overseas qualification assessment and the WESP program, OMA needs to communicate better what employment opportunities and assessments are available. I am going to talk to colleagues and see what they're doing to communicate this to the community. Also, one of the best things you can do to make change is to volunteering - work with different organisations; volunteer and get involved!

Graham Catt

Firstly, come and work in the private sector, not the public sector! I will talk to MARSS about some of the projects presented today - Bridging Australia and MARES. I would like to do something around pathways and assessment - how to actually help young people to get employment-ready. The things we learn at school are what we take into our workplaces. In the workplace we say "call out racism". But how do we do that? I would like to see this idea evolve in schools, and then become a tool for people to use in their workplaces.

Jodie Griffiths-Cook

People under 18 make up 25% of the ACT population. If we go up to the age of 25, young people make up almost one third of the ACT population. This makes you the single biggest stakeholder group in the ACT. This is a challenge for adults and decision makers – if we're not already targeting young people as a group, we need to focus on young people, as young people have a lot to share. I will continue "flying the flag" - that young people need to be involved in decisions, and to have young people share their problems and shape the solutions.

Annie McCarthy

I am going to talk to my boss about UC offering professional short courses for school teachers and professionals. I'd like to run programs around thinking about politics, political activities, building on things we already offer. I will go and talk to my boss, CALD colleagues and colleagues from indigenous backgrounds about this.

Dr Justin Barker

There is a difference between fitting in and belonging. I want young people to feel a genuine sense of belonging – across their whole life course. We need to facilitate mixing between communities and exposing people to diversity. There is a myth about young people – adults think that young people want to be left alone to do their own thing. But they don't. They want structured or semi-structured events to make sure diversity happens. When you mix with other people, you recognise them as human beings. How can we make sure we have this mixture or melting pot across the whole life course?



Biographies of Speakers



His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd)

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

David John Hurley was sworn in as the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 July 2019. David joined the Australian Army in January 1972, graduating from the Royal Military College, Duntroon into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. In a long and distinguished 42-year military career, his service culminated with his appointment as Chief of the Defence Force.

David was born in Wollongong, New South Wales. He grew up in Port Kembla and attended Port Kembla High School where he completed his Higher School Certificate. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the Royal Military College, Duntroon and with a Graduate Diploma in Defence Studies from Deakin University. He is married to Linda with whom he has three children. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Wollongong; a Doctor of the University, honoris causa, from the University of New South Wales; made a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering; and awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Macquarie University. Prior to being sworn in as Governor-General, David Hurley served as the 38th Governor of New South Wales from October 2014 – May 2019.



Alison Larkins

Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services, Department of Home Affairs

Alison was appointed as the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services in late 2019. She has extensive experience working across social policy portfolios at the Commonwealth level, with previous roles including Deputy Secretary, Social Policy at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, acting Commonwealth Ombudsman, and the head of the Refugee, Humanitarian and International Division in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

She is a National Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration, and has also worked as a Principal with the Nous Group, an Australia-owned management consulting firm. As the Coordinator-General for Migrant Services, Alison is working closely within the Commonwealth, and with state and territory governments, industry and the community sector to drive improvements to employment, English language, and broader settlement outcomes, and promotes the contribution migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants make to our nation.



Dewani Bakkum

Chief Executive Officer, MARSS Australia

Dewani has been involved in the community and charitable sectors for the past 30 years in Australia and in Fiji, and has an extensive background in developing and delivering services for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, with a strong focus on breaking down cultural and linguistic barriers to facilitate settlement and community participation. Migrating to Australia from Fiji in 1982, Dewani has a strong understanding of the migrant experience and a passion for helping migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants to participate in their new communities and to become proud and engaged members of a diverse Australian society. Dewani is passionate about her Fijian heritage, serving as past President, Vice President and Secretary of the Fiji Australia Association of the ACT.

Dewani has qualifications in Community Development, Business Management and Accounting. She has used her skills to provide strong strategic direction, leadership and problem solving capabilities to MARSS as the CEO. She has also previously held positions as Secretary, Deputy Chair and Chair of the MARSS Board of Management. Dewani has served as the Treasurer and Chair of the Settlement Council of Australia. Dewani has also been a member of the ACT Chief Minister's Advisory Committee to the Office of Fair Trading, the Council of Harmony Alliance and the ACT Multicultural Advisory Committee. She currently remains on the board of the Settlement Council of Australia and on the Advisory Committee for Welcoming Cities. Dewani has been awarded the FECCA Multicultural Award and the ACT International Women's Award for Multiculturalism.



Nip Wijewickrema

Youth and Disability Advocate, Co-Owner of GG's Flowers

Nip is a passionate and driven woman changing the world one flower at a time. Her family established GG's Flowers - a social enterprise florist providing meaningful employment for people with a disability in Canberra. Nipuni was named 2016 ACT Young Australian of the Year.



Jodie Griffiths-Cook

Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission

Jodie's job includes talking with children and young people about the things that are important to them as well as getting other people to listen to and understand what children and young people say about important issues, especially when they are making decisions that impact children and young people.

Jodie uses what she hears to let government, service providers, parents/carers and other people in the community know what they can do differently to better support children and young people in the ACT. With over 25 years' experience in human services, Jodie is committed to doing everything she can to promote a child-safe, child-friendly Canberra.



Dr Justin Barker

CEO, The Youth Coalition of the ACT

Justin is an anthropologist and youth studies academic with an extensive background in conducting research with marginalised population groups and community service providers in the areas of youth work, domestic & family violence, youth & family homelessness, child protection, alcohol and other drugs and service use by vulnerable population groups. Justin has extensive experience in program evaluation and working with community services to build their capacity for ongoing service improvement. Prior to his career as a researcher Justin was a youth worker in working with homeless young people. This experience led onto his PhD that examined the lives of homeless young people in Canberra, providing ethnographic insights into the conditions of youth homelessness.



Salar Ayoubi

Senior Policy Officer, Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), ACT Government

Salar Ayoubi born in 1978 in Iran. He migrated to Australia in 2000 following his Australian Tour in 1998 and his performance at the National Multicultural and Canberra Folk Festival in 1999. He graduated from Tehran Conservatorium of Music in 2000 and has done many national and international music tours since then. Salar joined the ACT Government as an event manager in 2007. He has worked in several areas within the ACT Government including Training and developments and Services Funding Support. Salar now works as a Senior Policy and Project Officer with the ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs.



Graham Catt

CEO, Canberra Business Chamber

Graham has over twenty years' leadership experience in private sector and member-based organisations, including 12 over years as the CEO of major national industry / professional associations. After beginning his career in communications, Graham achieved entrepreneurial success as a founding partner of communications agency Digital Eskimo, before changing career paths and joining the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners as NSW & ACT General Manager. Moving on to join the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) as CEO, over the next decade he delivered a 100% increase in membership and revenues and significantly enhanced AVA's influence and industry profile.

Graham was Chairman and President of the Australasian Society of Association Executives (AuSAE) from 2016 – 2019, is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders, and a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. His qualifications include a Masters' degree in Literature, an MBA from Macquarie Graduate School of Management, and was selected to participate in the London Business School's competitive "leading Businesses into the future" executive program. Canberra Business Chamber is the peak membership group and voice of the ACT's business community. Its mission is to support the start-up, growth and transformation of Canberra and region businesses.



Annie McCarthy

Assistant Professor of Global Studies, University of Canberra

In both her teaching and research, Annie is very interested in listening to children and young people's perspectives on global issues. In 2013 she spent a year living in Delhi, India where she undertook research with slum children on their understandings of development. At UC Annie teaches a range of units designed to get students thinking critically around key concepts like race, multiculturalism, gender and culture.



Warren Daley

Elder of the Ngunnawal People

Warren is an Elder of the Ngunnawal People – the traditional custodians and caretakers of the land on which Canberra now sits. The land of the Ngunnawal people extends from Goulburn to Yass and Burrowa southwards, as far as Lake George to the east, and Goodradigbee to the west.

Warren has previously held numerous roles, including as an Aboriginal Health Worker at Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health and Community Services (WNAHCS) - an Aboriginal community controlled primary health care service operated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of the ACT - and as a Case Manager at the Aboriginal Justice Centre.



Sandra Elhelw-Wright

CEO, Settlement Council of Australia

Sandra is committed to driving changes that improve individual lives. She has done this across various sectors—in the not-for-profit sector, government, and academia. In her current role as CEO of SCoA, she advocates for policies and practices that promote good settlement outcomes, and leads capacity building activities for the settlement sector.

She has previously worked in frontline roles in the settlement sector, and has managed the delivery of the Humanitarian Settlement Program.

Sandra also has experience working in government, where she progressed law reform in the areas of sexual assault and family violence. She has always had a strong commitment to communities she belongs to, having sat on a wide range of community boards and advisory committees. Sandra is a qualified lawyer, and has experience in academia through her postgraduate research on domestic and family violence in Australian Muslim communities.



Andrew Cummings

Managing Director, Andrew Cummings Training and Consultancy

Andrew Cummings is a freelance trainer, writer and consultant who has worked in the community sector for over 30 years. His areas of specialism include working with young people, and working with refugee and migrant communities. Andrew's previous roles include being Secretary General of the European Confederation of Youth Clubs; CEO of the Settlement Council of Australia; Executive Director of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition; and Executive Officer of the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network of NSW.

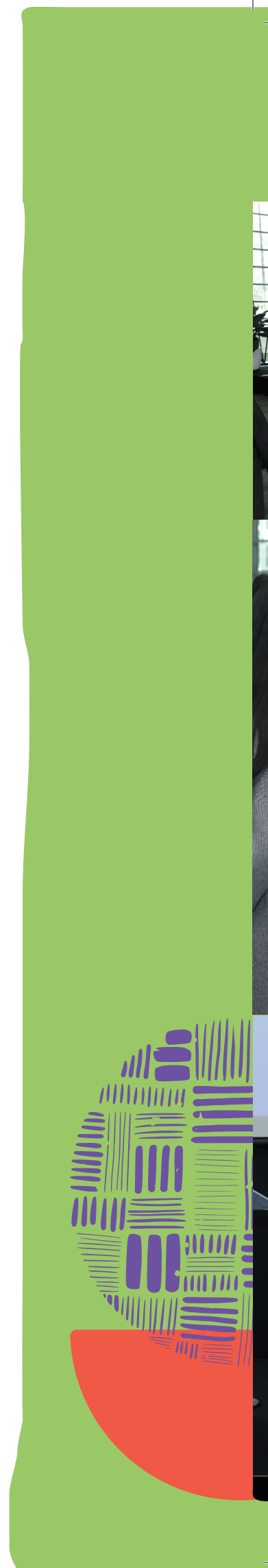
Andrew has written extensively on youth and settlement issues, with over 40 published works, published by organisations including the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, MYAN Australia, CREATE Foundation, Beacon Foundation, Youth Affairs Council of WA, Australian College of Applied Psychology, Right to Play (Canada), UK Youth and the National Youth Agency (UK). Andrew has also developed a wide range of training programs on youth and settlement issues, delivering these to more than 3,500 youth and community workers and more than 1,000 young people.



Lance Lee

Youth Program Officer, MARSS Australia Inc.

Lance is the Youth Program Officer at MARSS Australia Inc. and is currently studying International Relations and Anthropology at the Australian National University. Lance's interest in multicultural affairs was influenced by his mother's migration from Indonesia, as well as his own experience growing up as a culturally and linguistically diverse youth. Prior to joining MARSS, he had been a volunteer mentor for migrant youth at Dickson College. This position had deeply informed his perspective on the difficulties experienced by refugees and migrants who are settling in Australia, while also providing an inspiration to him when recognising their tenacity and courage. At MARSS, he hopes to foster these traits in both the Program for After School Studies and the Youth Mentoring Program, with the aim of guiding and supporting young people - the future of our country.





EMERGE 2021 Youth Summit Program

8:30 *Arrival and Registration*

9:30 *Housekeeping and COVID-19 Instructions*

MC: Sandra Elhelw Wright, CEO of Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA)

Warm-up Activity

Interactive drumming session

Charles Koker, Professional Drummer from African community

10.00 *Welcome and Introduction*

Dewani Bakkum, CEO of MARSS Australia Inc.

Welcome to Country

Warren Daley, Elder of the Ngunnawal People

Aboriginal Dance Performance

Wiradjuri Echoes

Launch of EMERGE2021

His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Video Address

Minister Yvette Berry
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, ACT Government

Keynote Speaker 1

Alison Larkins, Commonwealth Coordinator-General for
Migrant Services, Department of Home Affairs

10.40 *Break*

11:15

Video Address

Hon. Dr. Andrew Leigh MP, Member for Fenner, ACT

African Dance Performance

Favor Wallace, EMERGE2021 Steering Committee Member, representing Liberian community

Keynote Speaker 2

Nip Wijewickrema, Youth and Disability Advocate & Co-Owner of GG's Flowers

Youth Roundtable Discussions

Facilitator: Andrew Cummings, Andrew Cummings Training and Consultancy

1. Issues and challenges for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds regarding employment, education and belonging.
2. Ideas for solutions to overcome these issues and challenges.

1.00

Lunch

1.30

Island Dance Performance

Alisi Rabune, EMERGE2021 Steering Committee Member, Dakai Oliver Lilo, Lowame Junior Lilo, and Jane Viti Lilo

Feedback session from Youth Roundtables to a Panel of Experts

Facilitator: Andrew Cummings, Andrew Cummings Training and Consultancy

Panel of Experts:

- Jodie Griffiths-Cook - Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission.
- Dr. Justin Barker - CEO, The Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Salar Ayoubi - Senior Policy Officer, Office of Multicultural Affairs, ACT Government
- Graham Catt - CEO, Canberra Business Chamber
- Annie McCarthy - Assistant Professor in Global Studies, University of Canberra

MARSS Program Presentation

Lance Lee, Youth Program Officer, MARSS Australia Inc.

*Video: Audio-visual presentation of EMERGE2021***Closing Remarks**

Sandra Elhelw Wright, CEO of Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA)

3:00

Close





EMERGE 2021 Youth Summit Program

EMERGE2021 attracted 64 young people from the following communities and backgrounds:

Afghanistan

Afghanistan - Hazara

Bangladesh

China

East Africa

Egyptian

El Salvador

Fiji

Ghana

India

Iran

Iraq

Iraqi - Christian

Italy

Kenya

Liberia

Pakistan

Sierra Leone

South Sudan

Sri Lanka

Sudan

Syria

Tibet

Uganda



Supporters & Sponsors



This program is supported by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs and Department of Social Services

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